

Erythrina variegata var. *orientalis* Coral Tree¹

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INTRODUCTION

This fast-growing, 50 feet tall and wide deciduous tree with green and yellow-variegated, six-inch-long leaves creates a broad canopy but has spiny branches (Fig. 1). In spring, before the leaves appear, Coral Tree is decorated with showy red blossoms, each flower 2.5 inches long and arranged in dense, six-inch-long racemes. These blooms are followed by 12-inch-long, red/brown seedpods which contain poisonous seeds.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Erythrina variegata* var. *orientalis*

Pronunciation: air-rith-RYE-nuh

vair-ee-eh-GAY-tuh variety or-ee-en-TAY-liss

Common name(s): Coral Tree

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: shade tree; specimen; no proven urban tolerance

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 60 feet

Spread: 40 to 50 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

Crown shape: round; vase shape

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

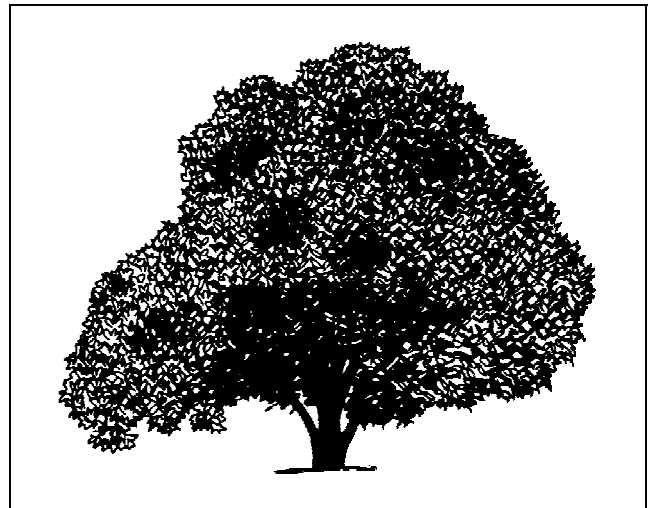


Figure 1. Mature Coral Tree.

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound; trifoliate

Leaflet margin: entire

Leaflet shape: deltoid; ovate

Leaflet venation: pinnate; reticulate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristics: showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: bark is thin and easily damaged from mechanical impact; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; thorns are present on the trunk or branches

Pruning requirement: requires pruning to develop strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown; gray

Current year twig thickness: stout; thick

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots can lift sidewalks or interfere with mowing

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

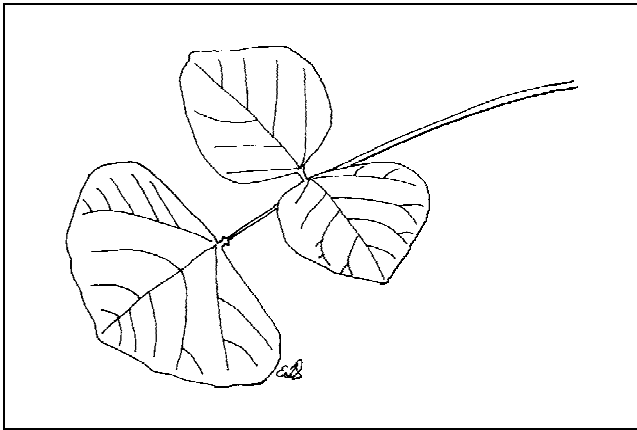


Figure 3. Foliage of Coral Tree.

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The large size of Coral Tree makes it suited for planting in parks, golf courses and in other large-scale landscapes. Multiple trunks ascend from the lower portion of the main trunk giving rise to a wide-spreading canopy casting dense shade. Lower branches droop to the ground if they are allowed to remain on the tree. Give this tree plenty of room to develop since the canopy is large and the tree looks wonderful with a symmetrical crown. Since the trunk often flares or buttresses at the base, plant it at least 10 feet from a sidewalk or driveway.

Coral Tree should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. Trees are highly drought-tolerant and moderately salt-tolerant.

Propagation is easily done by seeds, cuttings, or division.

Pests

Borers may infest weakened trees.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern. Caterpillars can eat significant amounts of foliage.